

Chapter I

Political Parties and Civil Pro-Independence Groups

Until very recently, the vast majority of Catalan nationalists have tended not to espouse separatist views (Conversi, 1997: 259–60). However, from as early as the end of the nineteenth century there have been identifiable but small groups of Catalans who did hope for independence (Llorens Vila, 2005; Rubiralta i Casas, 2004). Jordi Llorens Vila describes these groups as manifesting an emotional rather than a rational form of separatism, which coexisted with the development of Catalan autonomism and federalism but was unable to form itself into any kind of alternative political project (Llorens Vila, 2005). In terms of properly organised separatist groups, the first of any real political significance was *Estat Català* (Catalan State), founded in 1922 by Francesc Macià (Rubiralta i Casas, 2004: 11). During the political turmoil of the 1930s, which saw the brief existence of the Spanish Second Republic, two different declarations of Catalan sovereignty within a federalist framework were made. First, Macià (at that point the leader of ERC) took advantage of his party's win in the 1931 local elections to declare Catalonia a Free Republic which he hoped would become part of a Spanish confederation. However, once the Second Republic was established, Macià was forced to settle for autonomy. In 1934, his successor as President of Catalonia's Autonomous Government – Lluís Companys – responded to the victory of right-wing forces in the Spanish elections by declaring Catalonia a State within the Federal Republic of Spain, which led to his imprisonment and the suspension of Catalonia's autonomy.

During the Franco dictatorship (1939–75), Catalan nationalism was politically fragmented even though it was united in its opposition to the regime (Guibernau, 2004: 50–69). In the early years of the dictatorship, the *Front Nacional de Catalunya* (National Front of Catalonia) was formed in order to combine resistance to the Franco regime with a clear pro-independence agenda, but it was unable to achieve its goal of uniting all of Catalonia's separatist forces against the regime (Díaz i Esculfes, 2005). In

the early 1970s, Catalan separatism regrouped itself around the recently-founded *Partit Socialista d'Alliberament Nacional* (Socialist Party for National Liberation) (Rubiralta i Casas, 2004: 133–4). It was also at this time that a small number of separatists decided to turn to armed struggle, beginning a phase of minor terrorist activity that was to continue until 1995 (Pagès i Blanch, 2005).

Any semblance of unity between pro-independence groups forged in the last days of the Franco regime did not last long, and fragmentation has been a perpetual characteristic of Catalan separatism up to the present day. Autonomy and federalism were therefore the main strands to emerge from the Catalanist movements of the new democratic period (post-1975), and the dominant forms of Catalanism have been the non-separatist varieties represented by the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (Socialist Party of Catalonia – PSC), and CiU under their first leader Jordi Pujol. This dominance is now being challenged by increased support for ERC, which has come to play an important role in both the *Generalitat* (Autonomous Government) and local politics. Furthermore, parts of CiU itself have now moved towards support for independence, while a fluctuating collection of minor separatist parties have been joined by civil groups in an increasingly broad spectrum of pro-independence organisations. This chapter will look in detail at these developments, providing necessary background information for the discussions to follow.

To begin with, however, it is worth putting this discussion into context by looking at some of the available statistics on the evolution of support for independence since 2005. The main source here is a series of statistical reports published by the *Generalitat de Catalunya* itself through its *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* (Centre for Opinion Studies – CEO), created in 2005. Previous statistics collected by other bodies such as the *Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials* (Institute for Political and Social Sciences) show that there was a rise in support for independence towards the end of José María Aznar's presidency of the Spanish government (1996–2004), which fell again with the change of government in 2004 (Belzunces, 2008: 3). By 2005, figures were comparable to what they had been during the 1990s.

Initially, the CEO asked respondents to select between a range of different options for their preferred model of Catalonia's relationship with Spain. This included options ranging from 'Region' (i.e. with fewer powers than Catalonia currently holds), through 'Autonomous Community' and 'Federal State' to 'Independence'. From a base of 13.6% in June 2005, support for independence had risen to a massive 47% by 2013 (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2005: 15; Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013a: 28). Meanwhile, support for federal options had fallen from 31% to 21%, and

for the status quo as an Autonomous Community from 41% to 23%. Despite some minor fluctuations, these trends are clearly present throughout the thirty iterations of the survey, with the most significant leaps in support for independence coming between March and November 2012 (see Figure 1).

In 2011, the CEO introduced a new question to complement this existing one, asking how respondents would vote if a referendum on independence were held tomorrow. The decision to include this question in a government-sponsored report is significant in its own right. The first time it was asked, 43% said they would vote in favour, with 28% against and another 23% saying they would not vote (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2011: 28). By 2013, the percentages had risen to nearly 56% in favour, with only 23% against and 15% of abstentions (see Figure 2) (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013a: 28). To put this in context, in mid-2013 support for Scottish independence was standing at 37% with those against totalling 46%.¹ When asked why they would vote for independence, the most popular reasons given in 2013 were wanting Catalonia to have control of its own resources, and because Catalonia would be generally better off, followed by the feeling that the rest of Spain did not understand Catalonia (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013b: 24). Those who would vote against were most concerned with preserving the unity of Spain and their own dual identity.

It is always assumed that there is a high degree of correlation between having been born in Catalonia and having Catalan parents, on one hand, and supporting radical nationalist options on the other. This is true to some extent: Ivan Serrano's study of CEO data from 2011 shows those who identify themselves as solely Catalan or more Catalan than Spanish are definitely more likely to think that Catalonia should be an independent country (Serrano, 2013a: 526). However, Serrano's analysis also proves that regarding oneself as solely Spanish or more Spanish than Catalan does not automatically exclude independence as the preferred option, with small numbers in each of these groups saying that they would vote 'yes' in a referendum (Serrano, 2013a: 526–7). Similarly, among recent arrivals to Catalonia of any origin, 19% supported independence, as did nearly 25% of first-generation Catalans (Serrano, 2013a: 530). As we will see, this also affects the distribution of support for independence among political parties, which is spread more broadly than the parties' main constituencies might suggest.

Political Parties since 1980

Convergència i Unió

CiU was initially a coalition of two parties: *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (Democratic Convergence of Catalonia – CDC) founded by Jordi Pujol in 1974, and *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (Democratic Union of Catalonia – UDC), which has a much longer history, dating back to 1931. The parties federated in 2001 but retain distinct characteristics. CiU has either been in power or in opposition in the *Generalitat* since its full re-establishment in 1980, and has been an important force in local politics. It has also consistently won a small but significant number of seats in the Spanish parliament. Its two most influential leaders have been Jordi Pujol and Artur Mas, both of whom have been Presidents of the *Generalitat* (Pujol from 1980–2003 and Artur Mas from 2010 to the present). Both men came from CDC – the more influential partner – although UDC's leader Josep Antoni Duran i Lleida is the federation's Secretary General and spokesperson for the Catalan Group in the Spanish parliament.

It is perhaps helpful to divide CiU's attitude to self-determination into three periods: Pujol's presidency of the *Generalitat* (1980–2003), Artur Mas's leadership in opposition (2003–10), and Mas's presidency (December 2010–present). Pujol had always made it clear that neither he nor the party he founded had any kind of separatist agenda. Instead, his aim was to gain the kind of autonomy that would allow him and his fellow Catalans to 'live fully' as Catalans, a desire that he did not see as incompatible with maintaining a dual Spanish identity (Pujol 2012a: Kindle loc. 3835). As a result, Pujol concentrated on winning gains to Catalonia's autonomy whenever the climate was right for him to do so – for example, when CiU's votes in the Spanish parliament were needed by the party in power. This led to his party's approach being described as 'peix al cove' or 'pragmatic possibilism' (Dowling, 2013: 135).² There is no doubt that this did strengthen Catalonia's autonomy, but it left both Catalonia and CiU at the mercy of political machinations beyond their control.

When Pujol decided not to stand for re-election in 2003, he hoped to ensure a smooth transition, grooming Artur Mas well in advance as his successor. However, CiU's reputation at that point had been damaged by its 'pact of convenience' with the Spanish ruling party the *Partido Popular* (People's Party – PP), which was cultivating an increasingly strong Spanish nationalist discourse at that time (Dowling, 2009: 188). Mas's rival for the presidency was Pasqual Maragall of the PSC. Maragall was the popular former Mayor of Barcelona who had narrowly failed to defeat Pujol in 1999, winning more votes but fewer seats (Giordano and Roller, 2002: 102). In

the event, this pattern repeated itself in 2003, but with a controversial outcome (Madí, 2007): a three-way coalition cobbled together by the PSC saw Maragall installed as President at the head of a 'tripartite' left-wing government.

This meant a (not entirely unexpected) period in opposition for CiU, during which Mas would need to establish his authority within the party as well as improving his public image (Madí, 2007: 41, 44, 58). In order to do this, he stuck broadly to the route that had been mapped by Pujol while at the same time developing his own specific pathways: for example, by supporting the idea of a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia that Pujol had formerly rejected (Lo Cascio, 2008: 329; Mas, 2003: 125–31; Pujol, 2012a: Kindle loc. 1254). Mas played a pivotal role in negotiations on the Statute despite CiU being in opposition at the time. He also devised his own political programme and ideology, based on what he termed 'la Casa Gran del Catalanisme', or 'the Big House of Catalanism', an attempt to lead the construction of a consensus based on CDC's understanding of Catalanism that would appeal to all residents of Catalonia, whatever their origins. Most importantly, this was accompanied by statements supporting the right of Catalans to decide their own political future (Mas, 2007).

Nevertheless, Mas's move towards a sovereigntist position lagged well behind the views of some other members of CDC. Its youth wing *Joventut Nacionalista de Catalunya* (Nationalist Youth of Catalonia) had long been more inclined to independence, and some of the former members of this organisation who were now coming up through the ranks of CDC refused to sacrifice their earlier aspirations. Other rising stars of the party were also open about their support for secession, including one of Jordi Pujol's sons, Oriol Pujol. However, UDC retained its preference for a confederal solution, and Duran i Lleida found himself increasingly trying to put the brakes on Mas's drift towards an independent Catalonia. In 2010, CiU were finally able to reclaim power in the *Generalitat*. The events surrounding CiU's return to power and its re-election in 2012 will be examined in chapter 2, while the shift in CiU's position on independence between 2005 and 2013 will be further analysed in chapter 3.

Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya

ERC was born in 1931 out of a merger of left-wing forces that included Macià's *Estat Català*. Macià himself was its first leader, and – as has already been noted – it achieved resounding success in the local elections in the very year of its formation. Both Macià and his successor Lluís Companys played

pivotal roles during the period of Catalonia's autonomy under the Second Republic, although as we have seen their attempts to engineer the creation of a confederal Spain were unsuccessful. Companys himself was forced into exile towards the end of the Civil War, only to be arrested by the Nazis at Spain's request and sent to Madrid to face a firing squad. Surviving as best it could during the Franco regime, ERC was one of the clandestine political parties that worked to ensure autonomy for Catalonia was part of the political agenda for the restoration of democracy. However, its gains in the first years of democratic elections were disappointing given its hegemonic position in Catalan nationalism in the 1930s, and it did not appear able to broaden its appeal.

According to Klaus-Jürgen Nagel, this was partly because of the party's inability properly to distinguish itself from CiU, one cause of which was its 'disorientation' on the question of independence (Nagel, 2010: 136). Without a clearly-articulated stance, ERC existed in a grey area between its traditional confederal position and demands for reform of the system of autonomy, while neither ruling out nor committing to the possibility of independence (*ibid.*). This changed in 1987 when new faces Àngel Colom and Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira attempted to galvanise the party into adopting independence as one of its core aims. By 1991, under the leadership of Colom, ERC had declared itself independentist, becoming the principal institutional representative of this form of Catalan nationalism (Rubiralta i Casas, 2004: 203). However, the internal frictions continued, with Colom leaving in 1996 to form his own, unsuccessful independence party (Dowling, 2013: 134). He was succeeded as General Secretary by Carod-Rovira, who remained the party's major figure until 2008.

ERC certainly has solid credentials as an independentist party, and as we will see in chapters 2 and 3, Carod-Rovira has been crucial in projecting an attractively calm, inclusive and rational vision of Catalan separatism. However, the party has endured numerous electoral ups and downs as well as coping with internal dissent. Gaining institutional power as part of the 'tripartite' coalition governments of 2003–10 proved both a blessing and a curse, spelling the end of Carod-Rovira's association with the party and a hunt for a new leader. This mantle passed briefly to Joan Puigcercós, before settling on Oriol Junqueras in 2011. Wary of repeating the experience of the *tripartit*, Junqueras refused an offer of a coalition with Mas after the 2012 elections, preferring to remain in opposition while supporting (and galvanising) Mas's push for a referendum on independence.

Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya

The PSC was officially created in 1978, but draws on a much longer tradition of Catalan and Spanish socialism. In Spanish elections it is federated with the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party – PSOE), and shares its basic social-democratic approach. However, the two have traditionally differed substantially in their views on the organisation of the Spanish state (Roller and Van Houten, 2003: 13–14). The PSC favours a federal Spain that would allow for the recognition of Catalonia's differences and the consolidation of its self-government. On the other hand, until very recently the PSOE had shown no genuine enthusiasm for federalism, although it was of course instrumental in creating the current shape of the State of Autonomies while in power in Madrid from 1982–1996 and 2004–2011.

The PSC has normally performed much better in Spanish general elections and local elections than at the level of the Autonomous Community (Dowling, 2013: 132–3). Even when it managed to lead the *Generalitat* from 2003–10 this was only achieved in a three-way coalition. The party is mainly perceived as appealing to those whose family origins lie outside Catalonia and therefore have dual identities, to Catalans who 'believe that federalism *per se* is a superior political orientation' (Lluch, 2012: 452), and to those who put class issues before matters of identity. However, by 2013 a significant number of PSC voters – 22% – were prepared to vote 'yes' in a referendum on independence (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013a: 37). Moreover, a federal Spain was not the preferred option of PSC voters, with 40% instead preferring some form of autonomy, only 34.5% opting for federalism, and nearly 15% seeing independence as the best solution (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013a: 35).

This split has also become apparent within the party's leadership, and in the PSC's relationship with the PSOE. As we will see in chapter 3, pessimism about the real possibilities of Spain adopting a federal framework has grown markedly in recent years, to the point where many commentators now dismiss the idea as not even worth considering. Nevertheless, the PSC affirmed its commitment to federalism by the selection of Pere Navarro as its candidate for the Presidency of the *Generalitat* in the 2010 elections. The elections themselves were a disaster for the PSC, which won only 18% of the vote. In 2012 this percentage fell even further, to 14%, adding to the ignominy of having lost power in Barcelona's City Council in 2011 for the first time in the democratic era.

The party's official opposition to independence has not deterred many of the town councils under its control from joining the *Associació de Municipis*

per la Independència (Association of Municipalities for Independence – AMI), an umbrella group whose aim is to coordinate the struggle for independence at the level of local government. The PSC has also expressed qualified support for Catalonia's 'right to decide', a move which led it into direct conflict with the PSOE in February 2013, when 13 of the PSC's 14 members of the Spanish parliament voted in favour of motions on this issue presented by other Catalan parties, defying the PSOE's instructions to vote against them. These internal splits and the seriousness of the situation in Catalonia have finally led the PSOE to make a more serious commitment to federalism. A statement released by the party in July 2013 criticised the re-centralising tendencies of Spain's *Partido Popular*, laid out the issues with the current system of autonomy, called for a reform of Spain's constitution, and declared that 'federalism should be the definitive model for our territorial organisation' (Consejo Territorial, 2013: 7).³ It is too early to tell whether this will breathe new life into the federalist project, or convince those members of the PSC who have already moved towards other positions (causing divisions not just with the PSOE but within the PSC itself). More will be said in chapters 2 and 3 about the PSC's actions during the era of the *tripartit* and the PSOE's role in limiting the reform of Catalonia's Statute of Autonomy, but the main point to note here is that up to now PSC-PSOE has been incapable of providing a credible federalist alternative.

Partido Popular

The PP positions itself as a centre-right party and has a clear commitment to the territorial unity of Spain based on the provisions for this in Spain's Constitution of 1978 (Balfour and Quiroga, 2007: 114–17). Its branch in Catalonia is now known as the *Partit Popular Català* (Catalan People's Party – PPC), and was formed at the same time as the main party in 1989 following a change from the previous name of *Alianza Popular* (People's Alliance). The PP has generally resisted giving any further autonomy to the regions, although it was forced to make some concessions in the late 1990s to ensure CiU's support in the Spanish parliament. Its former leader José María Aznar (Prime Minister of Spain from 1996–2004) is an outspoken critic of Spain's peripheral nationalisms, as is its current leader, and Spanish Prime Minister since 2011, Mariano Rajoy. Given this pedigree, it is unsurprising that the PPC is a minority force in Catalonia, generally winning between 9 and 13 per cent of the votes in elections to the *Generalitat* and holding power in only a handful of local councils. Nor does the PP make up for this in Spanish general elections: in 2011, it enjoyed a landslide

victory in the rest of Spain but three of Catalonia's four provinces voted CiU while the fourth – Barcelona – voted PSC-PSOE. The resulting electoral map shows a quite dramatic split in political preferences between Catalonia and the rest of Spain, reminiscent of the Labour/Conservative division between Scotland and England during the Thatcher era.

The PPC treads a difficult line between the PP's centralism and an acknowledgement of some of Catalonia's cultural, social and economic differences. Nevertheless, it is a staunch critic of Catalonia's linguistic immersion policies in education and an advocate for the rights of Spanish speakers in Catalonia. Its leader since 2008 is Alicia Sánchez Camacho, now one of the most recognisable female figures in Catalan politics. Her influence is greater than the PPC's share of the votes might suggest, partly because of the PP's importance in Spain as a whole, and partly because she has a high media profile: she is both an easy target for criticism and a reliable source of controversial comment.

Nevertheless, the PPC's support for Spanish unity has been much less of a factor in the independence debate than the effect of the PP's actions in Madrid. As we will see later, it was the PP that initiated the most comprehensive of the legal challenges to the new Statute of Autonomy. Since coming to power in 2011, Mariano Rajoy has flatly refused to engage in discussions about either greater fiscal powers for Catalonia or a referendum on independence, and has proposed recentralisation of some of the functions of the Autonomous Communities as an answer to Spain's economic woes. Meanwhile, his Education minister José Ignacio Wert has set about trying to downgrade the position of autochthonous languages in the school curriculum, and to ensure that all Spanish school children are exposed to 'appropriate' forms of knowledge about Spain's history and identity as a nation. This has pleased the right-wing Spanish media (most notably the newspapers *ABC* and *La Razón* and the television channels *Telemadrid* and *Intereconomía*), which has become an ever more enthusiastic critic of Catalan nationalism. The effect of this double political and media assault is, as we will see, one of the main driving forces behind the Catalan independence movement.

Other Parties

A number of smaller political parties deserve a mention here, mainly because they illustrate the fragmentation of party-political forms of Catalan nationalism and the difficulty of establishing consistent electoral support outside the main parties. *Iniciativa Per Catalunya Verds* (Initiative for

Catalonia Greens – ICV) is a left/Green party that formed the third member of the *tripartit* along with the PSC and ERC. It houses supporters of both independentism and federalism – the latter differentiated from the PSC's version by its more radical, asymmetrical character (Lluch, 2012: 446, 449). *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (Popular Unity Candidates – CUP) is an anti-capitalist and pro-independence political grouping that initially concentrated its efforts on fielding candidates in local elections, where its representatives have grown substantially in number since a very modest start in 2003. In 2012, it put up candidates for the first time in the elections to the *Generalitat*, gaining three seats and thus adding to the total number of pro-sovereignty members of the parliament.

Other pro-independence groups have come and gone in the period 2005–2013. 2009 saw the launch (with much fanfare) of *Reagrupament Independentista* (Realignment for Independence – RI), a group that had split from ERC under the leadership of Joan Carretero and was intended as an agglutinating force for diverse pro-independence sectors. Its political programme had only two basic aims, independence and a complete reform of the democratic process, with no position on the left-right spectrum. Despite gaining some support, *Reagrupament* won no seats at the 2010 election, where its thunder was stolen by *Solidaritat Catalana per la Independència* (Catalan Solidarity for Independence – SI). SI was jointly led by the former president of FC Barcelona, Joan Laporta, whose support for the independence movement had made him a figure coveted by different pro-independence parties, including RI. Preferring to form a new group, Laporta joined forces with other well-known independentists (Alfons López Tena, Uriel Bertran and Toni Strubell) to form SI, winning seats for each of them in the 2010 elections. However, Laporta later left SI, retaining his seat as an independent member of parliament. SI won no seats in the 2012 elections.

Another quite different party also needs to be mentioned here: *Ciutadans–Partido de la Ciudadanía* (Citizens–Party of Citizenry – C's). Formed in 2005/6 at the height of debates over Catalonia's new Statute of Autonomy, C's is opposed to Catalan independence and the promotion of Catalan over Spanish in the region. It differentiates itself from the PPC by calling itself 'anti-nationalist' (thereby claiming not to be a Spanish nationalist formation), and centre-left rather than centre-right in its social and economic policy. Its support base is mainly located in Greater Barcelona, where it has won the majority of its votes. In 2012, it achieved nine seats in the Catalan parliament, winning some of the protest votes against independence that might otherwise have gone to the PPC.

Political Disillusionment and the Rise of Civil Movements

Since Spain's transition to democracy, party politics has provided the main outlet for expressions of autonomist, federalist and separatist views in Catalonia. However, over the last few years there has been a shift in focus away from the parties and towards civil action in support of independence, i.e. from political to 'sociological' Catalanism (Lluch, 2010: 341). This is not an entirely new phenomenon, as it draws on a long tradition – some would say myth – of Catalan civil society as the guardian of Catalonia's spirit and identity at times when political action was difficult (Ucelay Da Cal, 2008). However, the level of commitment and organisational professionalism currently being shown by groups not aligned with specific political parties most certainly is unprecedented, and points to an enhanced sense among many Catalans of what Rogers Brubaker calls 'groupness' (Brubaker, 2004: 12–13).

One of the main reasons for this swing away from political parties as the locus of pro-independence mobilisation is an increasingly widespread disillusionment with modern democratic processes in Spain. There are many factors in this disillusionment, some of them relating of course to the global financial crisis that began in 2008, which left many people in Western democracies cynical about the power of their elected governments to control the actions of multinational businesses and banking institutions. The Spanish government under both the PSOE and PP has been unable to deal effectively with the economic crisis, and there is a widespread perception that they have protected elites while making life harder for ordinary people. Constant cases of corruption at different levels of government in Spain – state, regional and local – have also made Spaniards extremely cynical about their politicians.

However, there is also a specific motivation for discontent in the case of Catalonia: the process by which Catalonia's new Statute of Autonomy was drafted and approved. None of the Catalan or Spanish parties emerged unscathed from the protracted wrangling over the contents of the Statute, which gave rise to widespread apathy among voters and a low turnout in the ratifying referendum held in 2006. The effects of this conflict were then prolonged for another four years by the challenge to the Statute in Spain's Constitutional Court. All this will be analysed in detail in chapter 2, but here it is worth noting the conclusions reached by Silvina Vázquez, who carried out a qualitative study on disillusionment with politics in Catalonia from 2008–10. Rather than a generalised disenchantment, by that time the

phenomenon in Catalonia had become specifically related to 'Spain as a *political nation*' (Vázquez, 2011: 62). Moreover, the initial apathy evidenced by the vote on the statute had passed, giving rise to a new mobilisation around the desire for 'recognition'.⁴

Given the widespread cynicism about politicians, it is therefore not surprising that Catalans should have turned to other forms of organisation to achieve this aim. This is not to say that there is a strict split between civil action and party politics, since in many cases the support and involvement of the parties is welcomed or even necessary. However, the impetus for action increasingly comes not from the parties but from other organisations, as was shown to spectacular effect with the demonstration on 11 September 2012 organised by the *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (Catalan National Assembly – ANC), in which around 1.5 million Catalans participated. Events such as this will be treated in the next chapter; meanwhile, the aim here is to provide necessary background information on some of these organisations.

Before doing so, we need to consider briefly the crucial impact that the internet and access to social media have had on the capacity of Catalan civil groups to organise events, recruit supporters, and spread messages. In this respect, Catalanist activism is no different to other kinds of contemporary social movement organisation, since as Manuel Castells puts it, 'alternative media are at the core of alternative social movement action' (Castells, 2009: 343). Specifically, though, I would argue that without social media and the internet, the Catalan independence movement could not possibly have progressed so far in such a short space of time, and even with the same chain of political events, levels of pro-independence activism and voter support would have been much lower at this stage.

One of the key media outlets for the pro-independence movement has been the newspaper ARA, which was founded in November 2010. Referring to it as a newspaper probably makes it appear as though the discussion here has suddenly turned to the traditional print media, but this is not the case. ARA's main strength is the way it integrates traditional and new media into an innovative multiplatform environment, including print, interactive web content, video and social media (Parreño Rabadán, 2010). On its third anniversary in 2013 it reported average daily sales of 27,520 print copies but more than 1.7 million online views, with 22,000 subscribers, 100,000 Facebook 'likes', and nearly 150,000 followers on Twitter.⁵ These figures show that the reach and influence of ARA go far beyond its actual sales, partly because of its emphasis on participation and dialogue with its readers. This dynamic is also reflected in its wide range of commercial activities and cultural patronage, which includes: an online

store selling books, wine, T-shirts and DVDs (among other things); 'ARA Films' which allows people to view Catalan cinema online for a fee of around 2–4 Euros per film; and schemes to provide copies of literary classics in Catalan to schools and libraries.

ARA was founded by a group of media professionals that included Carles Capdevila, Antoni Bassas, and Toni Soler, all of whom have strong connections with Catalan radio and television and were already well known at the time ARA was launched. It is largely aimed at well-informed and well-educated young Catalan speakers, who are (or will be) professionals and the leaders of Catalonia's political and civil associations (Giménez, 2010). Its active support for the independence movement is hinted at, but not explicitly stated, in its original mission statement:

ARA wants to contribute to the debate, talking about everything without dogmas or limits, so that Catalonia can look to the future with all its ambition and energy, and soon become one of the most prosperous and contented European societies, capable of generating non-material and material wealth for its citizens in a permanent and sustainable way.⁶

Not only is its editorial stance pro-referendum/pro-independence, it has also actively supported the organisation of demonstrations and other events. For example, it helped to mobilise the population to take part in the *Via Catalana* demonstration of 11 September 2013 (when a human chain was formed that stretched from the northern to the southern borders of Catalonia), even offering free subscriptions for a month to anyone who took part. The relationship between ARA and the independence movement is symbiotic: ARA generates support for pro-independence activities, and is rewarded by ever-increasing sales and influence among those who see it as the main mouthpiece for their views. Furthermore, its regular contributors are excellent examples of the power of the Catalan cultural and intellectual elite to shape the debate on Catalonia's future independently of the political parties.

As well as ARA's contribution to garnering support for pro-independence activities (and the campaign against road tolls discussed in the Introduction), there are countless other examples of 'e-mobilisation', on both large and small scales. Mass demonstrations such as those that took place in Barcelona on 10 July 2010 and 11 September 2012 relied on both civil and political groups to organise their supporters using their own email lists and websites, but they were also able to draw in unaffiliated individuals through the sharing of information about the events via the web and social media. To give just one example, in 2012 a short publicity video to

garner support for the 11 September demonstration was produced by the ANC and uploaded to YouTube. It used a poem by Salvador Espriu written to protest about Catalonia's subjugation during the Franco regime (part of *La pell de brau* (The Bull Hide), 1960). The poem was recited by various recognisable personalities from the world of Catalan politics and culture, translating Espriu's cry for freedom during the dictatorship into a present-day call for independence (Danés, 2012). At the time of writing (a year later) this had received over 63,000 views, although it is not possible to calculate in retrospect how many of those came in the short period between publication (1 September 2012) and the demonstration itself. A version with English subtitles had received over five thousand views.

Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport argue that one of the major changes brought about by new technologies is to broaden the range of participants, and the definition of what counts as activism or participation, while at the same time requiring much less organisational effort (Earl and Kimport, 2011). 'Drastically small teams' can now mobilise large numbers of people who have no formal connection to a social movement organisation, and the resonance of their actions can be even greater than before (Earl and Kimport, 2011: 163). There are indeed numerous examples of localised actions in Catalonia organised by small teams that have achieved massive dissemination before and after the event.

A representative example would be the 'Lipdub for Independence' that took place in Vic in October 2010, with 5,771 participants. (This was claimed as a world record lipdub, although *The Guinness Book of Records* does not actually recognise the category). The entire event was coordinated through Facebook and a Wordpress blog by a small collective whose names were generally not revealed, although individual spokespeople sometimes gave press conferences on the group's behalf. On the day itself, participants were filmed in the streets of Vic's old quarter lip-synching to a song called 'La flama' by the contemporary Valencian group *Obrint Pas*. Many of the participants belonged to cultural groups, which provided scenes involving Catalan dances and other forms of traditional culture. All material relating to specific groups or parties was banned, although people were encouraged to bring either the official Catalan flag or one of its pro-independence variations. According to Oriol Freixenet Guitart, not only was there massive participation in the event itself, but the video of it attracted half a million hits on YouTube in just a week, along with fifteen thousand comments (Freixenet Guitart, 2010). By August 2013, the official version on YouTube had been viewed more than two million times (Youcat, 2010).

Catalonia's civil groups find it easier than the political parties to gather a broad spectrum of supporters for such events, especially where – as with

the 'Lipdub for Independence' – there are no visible signs of different political allegiances. Mobilising under the unqualified banner of 'independence' greatly facilitates short-term coalition building, a process supported by the internet's power to underpin such 'loose and temporary connections' (Earl and Kimport, 2011: 151). Civil groups also seem to be better at devising innovative, fun activities in which people wish to participate, lipdubs being one example, flashmobs another. However, what seems most important here to explain mass participation in such events is the increased desire for recognition, as highlighted in Vázquez's study of political disillusionment (Vázquez, 2011: 62–3). Peter Dahlgren sees the demand for recognition in liberal democracies as relating both to questions of individual self-esteem and new conceptions of citizenship, which give rise to a desire for political agency that cannot be satisfied by party politics (Dahlgren, 2007: 56, 58). These connections seem to be confirmed by recent events in Catalonia, where civil groups that originally formed around issues of language, identity and culture have increasingly been radicalising into pro-independence organisations. If previous efforts by political parties and institutions have not been enough to guarantee recognition by the Spanish state (Vázquez, 2011: 63), then citizens may take these matters into their own hands.

Òmnium Cultural

Òmnium Cultural was founded in 1961, during the dictatorship, and is therefore by far the oldest organisation that will be mentioned here (www.omnium.cat). Its Latin name indicates that it is a cultural organisation 'belonging to everyone', and in this spirit its core mission has been to promote knowledge of the Catalan language and its associated culture as widely as possible. Over the decades, it has built up a portfolio of activities including administering literary prizes, organising a wide variety of cultural events, and promoting the use of the Catalan language in various settings. It currently has more than thirty thousand members and 28 branches.

Over the last few years, *Òmnium* has progressively become more and more directly implicated in the pro-independence movement. From 2009, its branches helped in the organisation of local consultations on independence. In 2010, it was the main organiser of the 10 July demonstration in support of Catalonia's new statute, under the banner of the 'right to decide'. Not only did over a million people participate in the march, but its impact was broadened significantly by the organisers' use of the web and social media to create what they dubbed Catalonia's first 'Demonstration 2.0' (*Òmnium*

Cultural, 2010).⁷ Live updates could be sent via Twitter using the hash tag *#somunanacio* ('we are a nation'), and the same keyword could be used when uploading photos to Flickr. This was facilitated by the creation of a temporary free Wi-Fi network along the route of the march. Interested non-participants and the media could therefore easily follow the progress of the demonstration, which also received live television and radio coverage.

Òmnium's current statutes (dating from 2011) list as one of the organisation's objectives 'the full collective recuperation of the identity of the Catalan nation', but make no direct reference to working for a Catalan state.⁸ Nevertheless, since 2012 it has openly committed itself to supporting Catalan independence, for example by working with the ANC in the organisation of the pro-independence demonstration on 11 September 2012. On 29 June 2013 it was the main organiser of a 'Concert for Freedom' in Barcelona FC's *Camp Nou* that was specifically designed as a call for a referendum on independence to be held in 2014. Despite some organisational difficulties that caused delays for those heading into the stadium, around ninety thousand people attended the concert, which was also broadcast on Catalan television.

Plataforma per la Llengua

Like *Òmnium Cultural*, the *Plataforma per la Llengua* (Platform for the Language) has become significantly more visible and radical over the last few years. Founded in 1993, as the name suggests the aim of *Plataforma* is to support and promote the Catalan language, working especially with new arrivals to Catalan-speaking regions (www.plataforma-llengua.cat). It also acts as a pressure group whenever legislation on language is being discussed at any level of government, and in commercial settings such as promoting the dubbing of films into Catalan and the use of the language in product labelling. One of its main concerns in recent years has been the attempts by the PP to challenge the use of Catalan in education. It publishes studies on these topics as well as guides designed to help Catalan speakers exercise their linguistic rights in everyday situations. In April 2011 it organised a lipdub of its own in Barcelona to highlight the role of Catalan as a language of social integration.

While the overall aims of the *Plataforma* have remained rooted in issues to do with the Catalan language, it has also given its support to pro-independence activities such as the *Via Catalana* (see above and Chapter 2). Unsurprisingly, many of its members support independence because they feel that the survival of the Catalan language depends on having the power

of a Catalan state behind it. A statement from the *Plataforma* after the Constitutional Court's ruling on the Statute reflects this without being an unequivocal call for independence: 'This ruling confirms that the Catalan language cannot have its own legal framework and bars the way to equality of linguistic rights in Spain. From now on, in order to guarantee these rights we must devise a radical change in the legal framework – either through a reform of the Spanish Constitution or through the creation of a new Catalan state within the European Union – which comes from the citizens of Catalonia and respects their right to decide on such a central element for social and cultural cohesion as is the Catalan language' (*Plataforma per la Llengua*, 2010).⁹

Assemblea Nacional Catalana

One of the founders of the *Plataforma per la Llengua* subsequently became the founding president of the ANC. Carme Forcadell Lluís, a Catalan philologist and teacher, was elected president at the ANC's constituent assembly in March 2012. Forcadell is also a member of *Òmnium Cultural*; it is not unusual for activists to be members of several such organisations either sequentially or simultaneously, but Forcadell is a particularly good example because of the influence she has wielded within these associations over the years. The prior experience of Forcadell and many other members of the executive explains how the ANC was able to organise the largest demonstration in Catalonia's history just a few months after it was officially constituted as an association.

The statutes of the ANC, as revised in 2013, commit the organisation to promoting the political and social conditions necessary for Catalonia to become an independent state, working to bring together groups and individuals with the same aim (*Assemblea Nacional Catalana*, 2013: 3–4). The reasons for this are explained in its founding document, approved in April 2011, which states that the autonomic model for Spain has failed and there only seem now to be two options: to remain with a united Spain that continues to be characterised by 'unifying and homogenising Castilian objectives', or to seek independence (*Assemblea Nacional Catalana*, 2011).¹⁰ The document also describes Catalan civil society's rejection of 'the current process of economic destruction and cultural genocide', its disappointment with the way it is represented by political institutions, and the increasing number of actions in favour of independence that have resulted.¹¹ Like all the other associations mentioned here, the ANC retains a scrupulous commitment to democratic means of protest and action.

Other Associations

So far, the ANC has achieved great success with its activities, as measured by participation, media and political impact, and the number of different associations with which it has successfully collaborated. However, the panorama of pro-independence groups springing from civil society is in many ways as fragmented as the political parties. Keeping alliances strong is the main challenge facing any organisation attempting to act as a pro-independence umbrella group, whether in the civil or political sphere. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the associations listed so far represent only the tip of a very large iceberg. Other examples include: *Sobirania i Justícia* (Sovereignty and Justice), founded in 2009 and mainly active in the Barcelona area; *Sobirania i Progrés* (Sovereignty and Progress), created in 2006 with the support of many well-known figures including Oriol Junqueras; *Catalunya Sí* (Catalonia Yes), which is a bridging organisation between party politics and civil society, whose primary aim is to support ERC's particular vision for independence; and the *Plataforma pel Dret de Decidir* (Platform for the Right to Decide), another umbrella group which since 2005 has organised demonstrations and publicity campaigns and helped to run the popular consultations on independence, although some of its members have now moved to the ANC. Supporting the work of these activists are a number of groups whose concern is to collect information in support of arguments for independence – e.g. the *Cercle d'Estudis Sobiranistes* (Circle for Sovereignty Studies) founded in 2007 – or to raise awareness of Catalonia's situation both inside and outside the region – e.g. *Col·lectiu Emma* (Emma Collective), which collates and disseminates news about Catalonia from and to interested parties throughout the world.

Two other organisations worth mentioning are the *Cercle Català de Negocis* (Catalan Business Circle, founded in 2008) and *Fundació Catalunya Estat* (the Catalonia State Foundation, created in 2011). These are particularly significant because of their orientation towards the business world. Historically, while many Catalan businesspeople – especially the owners of SMEs – have been sympathetic to cultural nationalism, they have seen Spain as the natural economic ambit for their business activities (Cabana, 2007). In contrast, over the past few years increasing numbers of businesspeople have started to argue that the protection of the Spanish state is no longer necessary or sufficient for Catalonia's economy to flourish (Canadell, 2013). The next two chapters will explore some of the reasons for this, including the perception that Spain has neglected Catalan business needs by, for example, failing to provide adequate infrastructure in key areas such as transport despite the high proportion of tax revenues gathered in Catalonia.

The *Cercle Català de Negocis* has been campaigning specifically on these issues and trying to win support from businesspeople. The remit of *Fundació Catalunya Estat* is broader in the sense that businesspeople are just one of its target groups, but it is important to note that one of its aims is to raise money from the business sector to support the pro-independence activities of other associations.



One of the main points raised in this chapter has been the on-going fragmentation of the Catalan independence movement, which has severely limited its political impact in the past. As we have seen, this fragmentation continues to affect both political parties and civil groups, with different formations constantly coming and going, integrating and splitting. It will be interesting to see whether the ANC can avoid this fate and genuinely act as the cohesive force it wishes to be – in the same way that we wait to see whether the pro-independence parties that currently have seats in the Catalan parliament can put aside their other differences if Catalonia's secession crisis finally comes to a head. However, it does seem that the negative effects of this fragmentation have been somewhat mitigated – at least in the civil sphere – by the power of the Internet to mobilise both committed activists and sporadic participants around specific events. In this sense, fragmentation could turn out to be an advantage as much as a disadvantage, since people do not have to commit to membership of any one organisation and can choose to participate (or not) on an event-by-event basis, thus very much increasing the pool of possible participants (Earl and Kimport, 2011: 93). As a result, organisers wield significant 'network-making power', capitalising on the dynamic nature of the civil movement to make multiple connections and exploit fleeting synergies (Castells, 2009: 47).

Furthermore, fragmentation and fluctuating memberships do not appear to affect the capacity of participants to trust either each other or the event organisers. As Montserrat Guibernau points out, people are generally quick to trust others when they feel they belong to a 'community of equals', because together they 'construct a shared illusion of forming a community created to fight for what they regard as a just common cause' (Guibernau, 2013: 103). If we add this to other factors such as an increased desire amongst ordinary Catalans for recognition and political agency, frustration at Spain as a political entity and at Catalonia's political parties, and independence as a rallying cry that glosses over other differences, it is not surprising that so many people have been drawn into active support for the independence movement.

The core membership of all of these organisations is mainly drawn from

the middle classes: teachers, lecturers, lawyers, doctors, businesspeople, local councillors, civil servants and journalists. Nevertheless, participation in specific pro-independence events involves a much broader spectrum of the population, especially in terms of age profile – many activities will draw whole family groups, which is one reason why they remain peaceful. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that a fair number of participants are 'new Catalans', although it is difficult to get an accurate picture. Attention is generally drawn to particular cases, such as the English-born author and journalist Matthew Tree, who has lived in Barcelona since 1984 and whose active support for independence has made him a key asset. The collaboration of household names such as writers, actors, singers, and media and sports personalities is an important factor for the success of publicity campaigns prior to any event, and for ensuring media coverage during and afterwards.

This membership profile suggests that the civil pro-independence movement is – like its political counterpart – largely directed by a core of educated middle-class Catalan speakers. This leads commentators such as César García and Thomas Jeffrey Miley to conclude that Catalanism is a form of elite-led ethnic nationalism dressed in more inclusive civic clothing (García, 2010; Miley, 2007; Miley, 2013a). Miley, for example, claims that 'working-class Castilian-speakers' preferences are being effectively blocked from articulation within the channels provided by political society', because even in parties such as the PSC, elected politicians are much more likely to identify as Catalans/Catalan-speakers than the constituency they represent (Miley, 2013a: 16). This then begs the question as to why these groups have not formed civil associations of their own to counter the work of Catalan nationalist organisations.

If the answer is that the working class will necessarily find it harder to form organisations than the middle classes, then we can ask why the existing civil group *Convivència Cívica Catalana* (Catalan Civil Coexistence – CCC) has not become more of a rallying point for alternative views (García, 2010: 12). CCC was founded in 1998 as a response to the increasing dominance of Catalan within the education system, and is therefore the civic counterpart to the more recently-created political party *Ciutadans*, mentioned above. CCC has been able to take various actions against Catalonia's policy of linguistic immersion in the education system, but has not generated large numbers of active supporters or broadened its remit in the light of the new debates around independence. García argues that this is because those who disagree with the hegemonic views disseminated by Catalan nationalists are caught up in a 'spiral of silence', which marginalises dissent and forces such people to resign themselves to having no political representation (García,